

3.2 SOCIO-ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

3.2.1 Social Environment

3.2.1.1 Population, Demographics, and Environmental Justice

A. Population

The US 8 corridor is located in a predominately rural agricultural area in Polk and Barron Counties. The exceptions to this are the Villages of Turtle Lake and Almena, and the City of Barron. Smaller, slightly urbanized, unincorporated communities on US 8 include Poskin and Range.

The 2000 Census population for communities in the project study area is presented in Table 3.2.1.1-1. The City of Barron is the most populous municipality with 3,248 residents. Other substantial population centers include the Village of Turtle Lake (population 1,065) and the town of Stanley (population 2,229). Other nearby communities outside the project study area include the Village of Cameron (population 1,546), City of Rice Lake (population 8,320), and the City of St. Croix Falls (population 2,033).

**Table 3.2.1.1-1
Population Projections for the Study Area**

Municipality in Study Area	Actual Census Population			Percent Increase 1990- 2000	2005 Population Estimate	2010 Projected Population
	1980	1990	2000			
Town of Almena	776	773	910	17.7	946	1,003
Town of Apple River	819	815	1,067	30.9	1,141	1,220
Town of Balsam Lake	960	1,067	1,384	29.7	1,460	1,592
Town of Barron	977	1,015	1,014	-0.1	991	988
Town of Beaver	755	663	753	13.6	832	846
Town of Clayton	789	780	912	16.9	975	977
Town of Clinton	851	849	920	8.4	981	967
Town of Maple Grove	948	926	968	4.5	986	953
Town of St. Croix Falls	873	1,034	1,119	8.2	1,235	1,238
Town of Stanley	1,813	2,087	2,229	6.8	2,417	2,376
Town of Turtle Lake	587	621	622	0.2	641	609
Village of Almena	526	625	720	15.2	761	791
Village of Turtle Lake	762	811	1,065	31.3	1,085	1,064
City of Barron	2,595	2,986	3,248	8.8	3,312	3,483
Study Area TOTAL:	16,011	17,042	18,931	12.5	17,763	18,107
Barron County	38,730	40,750	44,963	10.3	46,805	47,401
Polk County	32,351	34,773	41,319	18.8	44,613	45,901

Source: Department of Administration Demographic Services Center, 1993, 2000, 2003, 2005

Table 3.2.1.1-1 also shows the projected populations for jurisdictions in the study area. These population projections predict modest population increases for the municipalities of the project study area.

The population of communities in the project study area account for 19.5 percent of the total combined populations of Polk and Barron Counties. From 1990 to 2000, the total population of the project study area increased 12.1 percent. For the same time period, the state's population increased 9.6 percent. Of the communities in the project study area, the Town of Apple River experienced the largest population increase of 30.9 percent and the town of Barron's population decreased 0.1 percent.

B. Demographics

The demographic characteristics of the project study area indicate that the vast majority of residents are white. The largest minority race is Native American, which constitutes 4.5 percent of the Village of Turtle Lake population. See Table 3.2.1.1-2. Presumably this population is from the St. Croix Chippewa Tribe of

Wisconsin. The tribe operates the St. Croix Casino and Hotel located in the Village of Turtle Lake. Racial or ethnic minority neighborhoods have not been identified in the project study area.

Table 3.2.1.1- 2
Sex and Race by Community - Year 2000 Census

Unit of Government	Total Population	Sex		Race %			
		Male	Female	White	African American	Native American	Asian or Other
Town of Almena	910	476	434	99.8	0.0	0.1	0.0
Town of Apple River	1,067	554	513	97.8	0.3	1.3	0.0
Town of Balsam Lake	1,384	722	662	96.9	0.3	1.4	0.7
Town of Barron	1,014	501	513	97.9	0.6	0.0	0.1
Town of Beaver	753	392	361	97.2	0.0	1.3	0.1
Town of Clayton	912	485	427	99.2	0.0	0.3	0.1
Town of Clinton	920	473	447	98.6	0.1	0.5	0.4
Town of Maple Grove	968	493	475	97.1	0.1	0.0	0.1
Town of St. Croix Falls	1,119	600	519	98.5	0.0	0.1	0.5
Town of Stanley	2,229	1,132	1,097	98.6	0.0	0.1	0.6
Town of Turtle Lake	622	326	296	98.2	0.0	1.1	0.3
Village of Almena	720	360	360	97.1	0.1	1.3	0.8
Village of Turtle Lake	1,065	508	557	94.4	0.0	4.5	0.3
City of Barron	3,248	1,569	1,679	96.9	0.6	0.2	0.2
Total Study Area Population	16,931	8,591 (50.7%)	8,340 (49.3%)				
State of Wisconsin	5,363,675	2,649,041	2,714,634	88.0	5.7	0.9	1.7

Source: Department of Administration Demographic Services Center, 1993, 2000

There are slightly more males than females (50.7 percent vs. 49.3 percent) in the project study area. Male populations are higher in the rural towns while the female population is higher in the incorporated municipalities.

The median age for Polk and Barron Counties is 38.7 and 38.8 years respectively (see Table 3.2.1.1-3). These compare to the Wisconsin median age of 36.0 years.

Table 3.2.1.1-3
Age Demographics - Year 2000 Census

Unit of Government	Total Population	% Under 5	% 5-14	% 15-24	% 25-44	% 45-64	% 65+	Median Age
Town of Almena	910	3.7	13	10.9	26.1	30.5	15.6	42.3
Town of Apple River	1,067	6.5	14.8	10.2	28.5	28.2	11.8	38.9
Town of Balsam Lake	1,384	7.2	14.9	10.2	29	28.1	10.5	38.8
Town of Barron	1,014	5.1	16.2	14.4	24	25.4	14.8	38.2
Town of Beaver	753	6	13.6	9.8	27.1	31.1	12.5	40.2
Town of Clayton	912	5.5	15.8	10.4	27.3	28.8	12.4	39.4
Town of Clinton	920	6.3	18.2	14.9	25.1	22.5	13.1	35.3
Town of Maple Grove	968	6.2	18.9	13.1	28.8	23.4	9.5	36.4
Town of St. Croix Falls	1,119	6.1	14.5	12.5	29.2	25.5	12.3	39.2
Town of Stanley	2,229	5.8	15.8	13	30.2	25.6	9.6	37.8
Town of Turtle Lake	622	5	18.9	13.2	28.1	25.5	9.2	35.8
Village of Almena	720	7.1	17.2	14.2	31.8	15.8	13.9	32
Village of Turtle Lake	1,065	6.1	13.9	16.7	25.2	20.6	17.6	37.7
City of Barron	3,248	5.6	13.2	14.5	26.6	19.8	20.2	38
State of Wisconsin	5,363,675	6.4	14.6	14.3	29.5	22.2	13.1	36

Source: Department of Administration Demographic Services Center, 1993, 2000

C. Environmental Justice

On February 11, 1994, President Clinton issued Executive Order on Environmental Justice 12898. This Executive Order requires all federal agencies to address the impact of their programs with respect to environmental justice. The Executive Order states that, to the extent practicable and permitted by law, neither minority nor low-income populations may receive disproportionately high and adverse impacts as a result of a proposed project. It also requires that representatives of any low-income or minority populations that could be affected by the project in the community be given the opportunity to be included in the impacts assessment and public involvement process.

As illustrated in Table 3.2.1.1-2, minorities compose a relatively small proportion of the project study area and are not known to be concentrated in specific neighborhoods or areas along the corridor. The public involvement process has attempted to involve all corridor residents, including minorities and low-income residents.

In Barron, there are several hundred Somali immigrants who have moved to the City to work at The Turkey Store. The Somalis do not live in one particular neighborhood but do present housing challenges for the City as there is a limited supply of rental housing and number of residents per dwelling unit often exceeds the expected number.

In 2000, 8.7 percent of the entire population of Wisconsin had income below poverty level. Based on year 2000 census data, several of the project study area communities' population falls below the poverty level. The following communities exceeded the statewide average:

- Village of Turtle Lake—16.5 percent
- Village of Almena—14.9 percent
- Town of Clinton—10.3 percent
- Town of Turtle Lake—9.4 percent
- City of Barron—9.2 percent
- Town of St. Croix Falls—8.9 percent

The preceding communities were given special consideration with regard to potential environmental justice impacts. Based on windshield surveys, public outreach efforts, and conversations with local government administrators, it does not appear that these communities have any specific areas or districts with clusters of poverty level populations within the project study area.

3.2.1.2 Housing, Neighborhoods, Community Groupings

A. Housing

Compared to the state as a whole, a greater percentage of both Polk and Barron County residents own their homes. The statewide percentage of owner-occupied housing units is 68.4 percent and the percent of renter-occupied housing units is 31.6 percent. This compares to Barron County with 75.8 percent owner-occupied housing units and 24.2 percent renter-occupied housing units. Polk County's home ownership rate is even higher with 80.2 percent owner-occupied housing units and 19.8 percent renter-occupied housing units.

B. Neighborhoods and Community Groupings

Because of the rural nature of the project study area, there are few specific community groupings and/or neighborhoods. Outside of the City of Barron and Village of Turtle Lake, most housing is on large parcels, which is consistent with the rural, agricultural nature of the project study area. There are, however, a few exceptions to this generalization. At the west end of the project study area, the landowners surrounding Deer Lake have formed a homeowners association. This residential development, along with many others along the corridor, relies on septic systems and wells for their waste containment and water supply.

In Polk County, US 8 passes through the unincorporated community of Range. In Barron County, there is another unincorporated community called Poskin that is similar in nature to Range. Both have a small clustering of residences and a limited number of commercial enterprises.

There are two clusters of mobile homes located in Polk County. The first cluster is south of Deer Lake, in the southeast quadrant of US 8/170th Street. The second cluster is approximately three miles (5.2 km) west of the Village of Turtle Lake near the intersection of US 8/125th Avenue.

As shown in Table 3.2.1.2 -1, the total number of housing units in the project study area has increased over the past 20 years with larger percentage increases occurring in Polk County.

Table 3.2.1.2-1
Housing Units for the Study Area

Municipality in Study Area	Housing Units			% Increase	
	1980	1990	2000	1980-1990	1990-2000
Town of Almena	522	609	688	16.7	13.0
Town of Apple River	488	570	625	16.8	9.6
Town of Balsam Lake	730	906	1,018	24.1	12.4
Town of Barron	329	323	331	-1.8	2.5
Town of Beaver	373	419	441	12.3	5.3
Town of Clayton	340	371	412	9.1	11.1
Town of Clinton	312	332	385	18.5	10.7
Town of Maple Grove	324	337	347	4.0	3.0
Town of St. Croix Falls	410	486	538	18.5	10.7
Town of Stanley	663	805	911	21.4	13.2
Town of Turtle Lake	217	263	281	21.2	6.8
Village of Almena	238	270	304	13.4	12.6
Village of Turtle Lake	325	394	473	21.2	20.1
City of Barron	1,083	1,283	1,416	18.5	10.4
Study Area TOTAL:	6,354	7,368	8,170	16.0	10.9
Barron County	17,153	19,363	20,969	12.9	8.3
Polk County	16,226	18,562	21,129	14.4	13.8

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

C. St. Croix Chippewa Tribe of Wisconsin¹

The St. Croix Ojibwa (Chippewa) Tribe acquired reservation status in 1854 and became federally recognized in 1934. The approximately 4,000 acres (1,618.7 ha) of reservation lands are scattered in four counties in northwest Wisconsin: Burnett, Polk, Barron, and Douglas. There are nine separate communities that require services, and an off-reservation population that also requires services. According to the most recent studies conducted, the service population of the reservation is 1,775.

The St. Croix Tribal Council is composed of five members publicly elected to two-year terms that govern the St. Croix Chippewa Tribe. The Council consists of a Chair, Vice-chair, Secretary/Treasurer, and two Administrators. The Tribal Council provides services and carries out its duties and responsibilities through powers outlined in the tribal constitution and bylaws. The St. Croix Tribal Council operates programs and projects out of its offices located in the Tri-County Ojibwa Center at the Sand Lake Reservation Community near Hertel, Wisconsin.

There are considerable amounts of flat lands and wetlands on the reservation. The receding glaciers left many pitted outwash areas that are fairly flat and dotted with pothole lakes and swamps. Wooded areas cover a large portion of the reservation communities as well. The St. Croix Flowage, one of the four major river watersheds in northwestern Wisconsin, has some influence on reservation communities. However, all communities lie in the St. Croix River Watershed. Part of the reservation lies on the National Scenic

¹ Source: <http://www.epa.gov/reg5oopa/tribes/tribepages/stcroix.htm>

Riverway of the St. Croix and Namekagon Rivers, which was one of the initial riverway systems to receive designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

3.2.1.3 Community Facilities, Utilities, and Emergency Services

A. Community Facilities

1. Schools

The project study area is served by five school districts, St. Croix Falls, Amery, Turtle Lake, Barron, and Cameron. The schools nearest to US 8 are in the City of Barron and Village of Turtle Lake. In addition to the municipalities, the school districts also serve the surrounding townships. Because of the rural nature of the surrounding area, busing is an important means of transportation. For instance, the Turtle Lake School District serves the following towns: Almena, Arland, Beaver, Clayton, Clinton, Crystal Lake, Johnstown, and Turtle Lake. In order to provide transportation to the 588 students enrolled in 2002, the district buses travel 134,452 miles/year (216,333 km/year). Conversations with school staff indicate that all five of the school districts' bus routes travel on US 8 for a portion of the trips.

2. Postal Service

Postal service in the project study area is provided by U.S. Post Offices in Turtle Lake (54889), Almena (54805), and Barron (54812).

Park systems within the project corridor include municipal parks, county parks, and state parks; see Section 3.1.3.1 for additional details.

3. Libraries

The Village of Turtle Lake and City of Barron in Barron County, have public libraries. These libraries provide many services including video and tape lending, computer use, and Internet access, copy machines for public use, summer reading programs, library interloan program, preschool story hour programs, and issues of local newspapers on microfilm or microfiche.

Libraries that serve residents of Polk County include the Village of Turtle Lake, Village of Balsam Lake, and City of St. Croix Falls.

4. Social Services

There is a senior center in Barron that offers meals and activities for the area's elderly population. In addition, the Barron County Office on Aging provides many services for area residents. Some of the services include:

- Adult day care
- Driver refresher course
- In-home respite care
- Meals-on-Wheels
- Senior dining
- Incontinence supplies

The Polk County seat is in Balsam Lake, north of the US 8 corridor. Therefore, unlike Barron County, the base for many of the countywide services is not in the study corridor. However, Polk County provides many of the same social services as Barron County and these services are available to study area residents.

5. Government Facilities

The Barron County Courthouse and City of Barron Municipal Building are located three blocks south of the existing US 8 corridor. The Barron County Justice Center is under construction and is located west of WIS 25 on the north side of the City of Barron.

The Village of Turtle Lake's municipal building is located south of US 8 in the Village's downtown area. The town of Clinton Hall is located along the north side of US 8 in Poskin.

B. Utilities

Utility availability varies throughout the project study area. In general, water and sewer are available in the Village of Turtle Lake and City of Barron. Rural areas outside of the Village of Turtle Lake and City of Barron rely on privately held wells and in-ground septic systems for their waste and sewer service.

As part of the local wastewater treatment facility, there are two sets of lagoons on the southeast side of Barron. One set is used by the City of Barron and a local manufacturer uses the other. Both lagoons are planned for reconstruction in the next ten years.

Natural gas is provided by Wisconsin Electric-Wisconsin Gas Company, formerly Wisconsin Gas, in the project study area.

Electric service is provided by a number of companies:

- Barron Electric Co-op
- Barron Light and Water
- Cumberland Municipal Utility
- Dairyland Power Cooperative
- Xcel Energy
- Rice Lake Utilities

In addition to the power distribution facilities located within the project study area, Dairyland Power Cooperative has power transmission lines located along and near US 8. At County T/13th Street, west of Barron, the transmission line shifts from parallel and north of US 8 to southeasterly to connect with the power distribution center located on the southwest side of Barron. The double circuit 161/69 kV electrical transmission line on steel poles extends westerly from the City of Barron into Polk County generally along the edge of US 8 to the Apple River Distribution Substation at 70th Street. From 70th Street, a single circuit 69 kV transmission line extends westerly 2.5 miles before turning north just east of WIS 46 South. Dairyland Power Cooperative plans to install replacement and new 161 kV line on 135 foot steel poles along US 8 beginning in Range and extending to 150th Street (one mile west of WIS 46 North). The line will then turn south at 150th Street and continue to St. Croix Falls.

Two companies provide telephone service:

- CenturyTel
- CTC Telcom

C. Emergency Services

1. Fire

There are several fire departments in Barron County. The primary response providers are in the Village of Almena, Village of Turtle Lake, and City of Barron. The fire departments also serve properties in the surrounding towns. In Polk County, the City of St. Croix Falls and Village of Balsam Lake provide fire protection services to the US 8 study area.

2. Ambulance

In Barron and Polk Counties there are several ambulance service providers that respond to emergency calls throughout the project study area. The responders are:

- Amery Ambulance Service
- Barron Ambulance
- Birchwood Ambulance Service
- Chetek Ambulance Service

- Clear Lake Ambulance
- Cumberland Ambulance Cumberland Memorial Hospital
- Dallas Area Ambulance Service
- Rice Lake Ambulance Lakeview Medical Center

3. Health Care

There are several health care facilities in the project study area and its immediate vicinity.

Cumberland Memorial Hospital is a 40-bed hospital that provides primary medical and surgical care, 24-hour emergency care, and obstetrical services. The hospital also operates a clinic in the Village of Turtle Lake.

The Barron Hospital is part of Barron Medical Center-Mayo Health System. Its services include a 24-hour emergency room, urgent care night clinic, surgery, obstetrics, rehabilitative services, physical therapy and sports medicine, CT scanning, mammography, radiology, homecare services, dialysis, and general, orthopedic, and ophthalmologic surgery.

The Lakeview Medical Center in Rice Lake has more than 50 full-time, resident doctors representing 18 medical specialties, including anesthesiology, dermatology, emergency medicine, family practice, general surgery, internal medicine, nephrology, obstetrics and gynecology, oncology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, orthopedics, pediatrics, psychiatry, radiology, urology, and ear, nose and throat.

4. Law Enforcement

The sheriff's department from Polk and Barron Counties provides law enforcement for the towns in the project study area. Municipalities with their own police department include the Village of Turtle Lake, Village of Almena, and City of Barron. The entire project corridor has 911 service.

3.2.1.4 Work Force

The workforces of Polk and Barron Counties are very similar. Based on year 2000 census data, the unemployment rates for Polk and Barron Counties were 2.6 percent and 3.2 percent, respectively. This compares to the statewide unemployment rate of 3.2 percent in the same year. The top industries in both counties are manufacturing, educational services, retail trade, and construction. The top three occupations in both counties are management, professional, and related occupations; production, transportation, and material moving occupations; and sales and office occupations.

The economy of Polk County includes a diversified mix of industries that employs 21,800 people. The largest employer in Polk County is Polaris Industries, which manufactures transportation equipment and employs in the range of 500-999 people. The second largest employer is Polk County, which also employs in the range of 500-999 people. Neither of these employers is located on US 8.

The economy of Barron County is also based on a diverse industry base that employs 22,500 people. The Jenny-O Turkey Store is the largest employer and employs 2,500 people. The second largest employer is the St. Croix Casino, which employs over 900 people. Other important employers in Barron County include the Rice Lake School District and Barron County.

The Jenny-O Turkey Store has facilities throughout the City of Barron. One of its largest processing plants is located at the intersection of US 8 and WIS 25 (N) and is a destination for hundreds of employee vehicles and many semitrucks per day. The St. Croix Casino is also located directly on US 8 in the Village of Turtle Lake. In addition to its importance as an employer, the St. Croix Casino is a popular tourist destination, particularly on evenings and weekends.

3.2.1.5 Tax Base

A. Income²

According to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, the total personal income generated in Polk County increased from \$501,267,000 in 1990 to \$940,559,000 in 2000. This represents an 87.6 percent increase. For Barron County, total personal income increased from \$587,673,000 in 1990 to \$1,005,315,000 in 2000. This represents a 71.1 percent increase. Both counties experienced a higher percent increase than the state (69.5 percent) over the same time period.

The per capita personal income for the year 2000 was \$22,688 for Polk County and \$22,320 for Barron County. The statewide average personal income was \$28,100. Therefore, the per capita income in both counties is approximately 80 percent of the statewide average.

B. Property Tax³

Property tax is an important local revenue source. According to the Wisconsin Department of Revenue, the 2001 equalized property value for Polk County was \$2,679,781,950. The effective tax rate was 4.15 percent. The 2001 equalized property value for Barron County was \$2,344,445,300 and the effective tax rate was 4.55 percent.

3.2.2 Economic Climate

3.2.2.1 Existing Economic Sectors

The economies of Polk and Barron Counties include a diversified mix of industries that employ 21,800 and 22,500 people, respectively. The primary fields of employment include industry, agriculture, government, tourism, and service and commercial enterprises.⁴

A. Industry and Manufacturing

The largest employer in both counties is the Jenny-O Turkey Store, which employs over 2,500 people. The main production facility for The Turkey Store is located in the City of Barron at the intersection of US 8 and WIS 25 (N). The largest employer in Polk County is Polaris Industries, which manufactures transportation equipment and employs in the range of 500-999 people. The Polaris facility is not located on US 8.

B. Agriculture/Rural Industry

Agriculture plays a minor role in the number of people employed but is an important contributor to the regional economy. In Polk County for the year 2000, agriculture employed approximately 2 percent of the workforce or 436 persons. In Barron County for the year 2000, agriculture employed approximately 2 percent of the workforce or 450 persons. In Barron County, agriculture is estimated to have a \$400 million impact on the economy. Besides traditional farming, there are numerous related agricultural businesses such as an implement dealer, agricultural cooperative, and other agriculture support services. One of the sectors related to agricultural production is food processing, and there are several such firms in the project study area that employ over 350 people.

C. Government

In Polk County, the county government employs in the range of 500-999 people. The county seat is located in Balsam Lake and thus is not located directly on the corridor.

Barron County's seat is located in the City of Barron and employs 250-499 people. The Rice Lake School District is the other major governmental employer in Barron County where 250-499 people are employed.

² Wisconsin Department of Revenue, County Personal Income Report, <http://www.dor.state.wi.us/ra/0208/0208copi.pdf>, 2002

³ Wisconsin Department of Revenue, Polk and Barron County Tax Rate, <http://www.dor.state.wi.us/lfa/01corate.html>, 2001

⁴ Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, Barron County Workforce Profile, 2002.

D. Tourism

The second largest employer in the project study area is the St. Croix Casino and Hotel that employs over 900 people. The casino is the most frequently visited tourist destination in the project study area and it attracts approximately 5,000 people per day.

Other tourism activities in both counties are seasonally dependent. There are numerous lakes throughout the area and swimming, fishing, and boating are popular recreation activities. The Gandy Dancer bike trail is a popular destination. The trail follows an old railroad bed from St. Croix Falls to Superior, Wisconsin.

Winter activities include cross-country and downhill skiing at two local ski resorts. Numerous people also visit the area lakes for ice fishing. There are local ATV and snowmobile trails as well. In 2001, \$67,082,955 was expended on tourism in Polk County. This represents a 134 percent increase from 1993.

Barron County has many of the same outdoor recreational opportunities. In 2001, \$97,021,519 was expended on tourism in Barron County. This represents a 134 percent increase from 1993.

E. Service and Commercial

The number of service and commercial industries along the US 8 corridor has remained relatively static over the past few years. In the City of Barron, a fast food restaurant recently closed. The Village of Turtle Lake has experienced a slow increase in the number of service industries since the St. Croix Casino opened in 1991 including a gas station, hotel, and fast food restaurant. West of the project terminus in the City of St. Croix Falls, a discount retail store, liquor store, and grocery store have opened in the past 10 years.

The largest service employer in the two counties is the St. Croix Regional Medical Center, which employs in the range of 250-499 people. Medical centers in the City of Amery and the City of Rice Lake are also important service employers.

3.2.2.2 Economic Trends⁵

The strongest economic growth in Polk County appears to be occurring in the City of St. Croix Falls, just west of the western project terminus. This growth can be attributed to the regional influence of the Twin Cities and the number of commuters from Wisconsin. Cities along the Wisconsin/Minnesota border have experienced tremendous growth, most notably, the City of Hudson adjacent to I-94.

A similar situation has occurred in the City of Rice Lake located to the north of the project study area in Barron County. The City has experienced a significant growth in commercial, service, and professional businesses located near the highway. National discount stores, grocery stores, restaurants, and office buildings have chosen to locate in Rice Lake because of its easy accessibility and its influence as a regional consumer destination.

Both counties have seen a large increase in the number of people employed in the service industry. In Polk County, the number of people employed in eating and drinking establishments has increased 109 percent between 1998 and 2003, and the number of people employed in food stores increased 114 percent over the same period. Similarly, in Barron County, the number of people employed in eating and drinking establishments increased 173 percent, and the number of people employed in general merchandise stores increased 143 percent.

Polk County has experienced a large increase in the health services and educational services. As the population grows, it is likely these services will continue to add new employees to serve the increasing demand for services. Barron County can also expect further employment increases in industrial machinery and equipment as cities such as Barron and Rice Lake continue to develop their industrial parks.

⁵ Department of Workforce Development, Barron County Workforce Profile, 2002